

**THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL ADVERTISING ON GENERATION Z CONSUMPTION
BEHAVIOR**

**Donald Frensius Pasaribu¹, Dimas Ariyoga Irawan^{2*}, Rico Hafis Hansyah³, Inda Khalili⁴,
Christian Slamet Silalahi⁵, Dewi Permata Waruwu⁶**

¹²³⁴⁵⁶Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis Humaniora, Universitas Tjut Nyak Dhien, Medan, Indonesia

*Correspondence Email: dimasariyoga15@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to critically analyze the impact of digital advertising on the consumption behavior of Generation Z through a comprehensive literature synthesis. Generation Z is the group most adaptive to technological developments, making them the primary target of digital marketing. The method used is a literature review with article selection criteria based on publication year (2019–2025), topic relevance, and type of research. The synthesis results show that digital advertising influences Gen Z's consumption behavior through three main dimensions: psychological (visual appeal, emotional messaging), social (the role of influencers, social proof), and economic (transaction convenience, e-commerce integration). This article offers a new conceptual model that illustrates the simultaneous relationship between digital advertising exposure, psychological–social mediation, and Gen Z's consumptive behavior. The study also highlights inconsistencies across previous findings, particularly regarding influencer effectiveness and advertising exposure duration. Strategic recommendations for digital marketing practitioners and directions for future research are also provided.

Keywords: digital advertising; consumer behavior; Generation Z; social media; digital marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Advances in communication technology and the digitalization of the economy have transformed the way companies market their products and consumers make purchasing decisions. One of the groups most affected by these changes is Generation Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012. This generation is known as digital natives, who have been accustomed to interacting with technology and social media since childhood (Efendi & Giayana, 2025).

Digital advertising has become a primary means of reaching Generation Z due to its ability to combine visual, interactive, and emotional elements that align with the younger generation's lifestyle (Putri et al., 2024). Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have become prime platforms for creative advertising campaigns involving influencers and user-generated content strategies.

Various studies have shown that Generation Z tends to respond positively to relevant and engaging content, but is also easily bored by excessive advertising (Ningsih et al., 2025; Balqis et al., 2025). This phenomenon poses new challenges for companies in balancing promotion and ethical digital communication.

By understanding the relationship between digital advertising and Generation Z's consumption behavior, this research is expected to contribute to effective and responsible digital marketing strategies.

However, the results of the literature review indicate that there are still research gaps that need to be clarified. First, most previous studies have focused only on a single dimension of the impact of digital advertising for instance, psychological aspects or the role of influencers without integrating the psychological, social, and economic dimensions simultaneously within a comprehensive analytical framework (Nath, 2024). Second, there are variations in findings (inconsistencies) across studies, such as differences in the effectiveness of macro-influencers versus micro-influencers or the effectiveness of humorous content compared to educational content, indicating the need for deeper critical analysis and comparative evaluation (Aldousari, 2024). Third, previous research has not thoroughly explored how digital advertising exposure shapes social identity and sustainable consumptive behavior among Generation Z, even though several studies emphasize that social proof and digital trends are dominant factors in purchasing decisions (Malik & Tass, 2025). These gaps highlight the need for a more critical, comprehensive, and integrated literature synthesis to fully understand the impact of digital advertising on Generation Z's consumption behavior.

Problem Formulation

1. What characteristics of digital advertising influence Generation Z's consumption behavior?
2. How do psychological, social, and economic dimensions play a role in shaping Gen Z's consumption behavior?
3. How do previous research findings indicate differences or contradictions regarding the impact of digital advertising on Gen Z?
4. How can a conceptual model be formulated to explain the relationship between digital advertising and Generation Z's consumption behavior?

This research aims to:

1. Describe the characteristics of digital advertising relevant to Generation Z.
2. Critically analyze the psychological, social, and economic roles in Gen Z's consumption behavior.
3. Identify inconsistencies in findings from various previous studies.
4. Propose a new conceptual model regarding the influence of digital advertising on Generation Z's consumption behavior.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative literature review approach to analyze the influence of digital advertising on Generation Z's consumption behavior. The literature reviewed includes national and international scientific articles published between 2019–2025.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

1. Articles published between 2019–2025.
2. Studies discussing digital advertising, social media marketing, consumer behavior, or Generation Z.
3. Peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and other credible academic sources.
4. Studies using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method designs.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Publications prior to 2019.
2. Articles unrelated to Generation Z's consumption behavior.
3. Non-academic sources such as blogs, popular news, or commercial reports.
4. Articles lacking methodological clarity.

Data Collection Procedure

More than 20 relevant articles were collected from Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, SINTA journals, and national academic repositories.

The review followed three systematic steps:

1. Identification & Screening – selecting articles by relevance, publication year, abstract suitability, and methodological rigor.
2. Content Analysis – mapping research themes, key findings, theoretical frameworks, and variables.
3. Synthesis – comparing convergent/divergent findings, identifying research gaps, and developing an integrated conceptual model.

Tabel 1. Summary Table of Core Articles Analyzed

No Author (Year)	Research Focus	Key Findings
1 Alhabsy (2025)	Humor in advertising	Humor increases Gen Z engagement
2 Amani (2025)	Marketing communication for Gen Z	Authenticity is more effective than formal advertising
3 Zed (2025)	Social media & consumption	Social proof triggers impulsive consumption
4 Utama (2024)	E-commerce & impulsive buying	Instant shopping features make it easier for Gen Z to purchase
5 Putri (2022)	Price discount	Discounts increase Gen Z's impulsive buying

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Advertising Characteristics and Generation Z Responses

The literature review shows that digital advertising is the most effective means of reaching Generation Z, who are strongly attached to technology, social media, and a fast-paced lifestyle. This generation grew up in a digital environment that allows them to receive, process, and respond to information at high speed. Therefore, marketing strategies targeting this group must prioritize messages that are visually, emotionally, and interactively packaged (Alhabsy et al., 2025). Humorous elements, a relaxed communication style, and social relevance in digital content have been proven to capture their attention and create a positive brand image in the minds of young consumers.

Furthermore, Generation Z tends to reject messages that are rigid or overly commercial. They value content that is perceived as authentic, relatable to everyday life, and has a strong emotional meaning. Advertisements that use a narrative approach—for example, by telling stories about user experiences or brand journeys—can strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and products. This aligns with Generation Z's characteristics, which prioritize experiential value over functional value, where digital experiences are the driving force behind their consumption decisions (Alhabsy et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of digital advertising is also determined by choosing a platform that aligns with user characteristics. A study by Amani et al. (2025) found that social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have become primary platforms for brands to interact directly with young audiences due to their ability to deliver visual, fast, and easily shareable content. Generation Z is not only a recipient of messages but also plays a role as a co-creator of content through comment, duet, and remix features that allow them to express their opinions on specific products or brands.

This participatory phenomenon demonstrates that Generation Z wants to be involved in the brand communication process. They value transparency and two-way interaction between consumers and producers. Therefore, participatory digital communication strategies such as interactive campaigns, challenges, or user-generated content are more effective than one-way promotions. Such campaigns not only increase message reach but also foster a sense of belonging to the brand among young users.

Furthermore, Amani et al. (2025) also emphasized that Generation Z's attention span is very short, averaging only a few seconds. Therefore, advertising messages need to be designed in a concise, visually appealing format that conveys the core message immediately at the beginning of the broadcast. Dynamic graphic design, contrasting colors, and trendy music can strengthen the initial impression, which significantly determines whether audiences will continue watching or scroll to other content.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the key characteristics of effective digital advertising for Generation Z include strong visuals, authentic messaging, user participation, and the use of popular platforms in a concise format. A strategy that combines these four elements is believed to be able to increase consumer engagement and strengthen brand loyalty amidst increasingly dense content competition in the digital era.

The Influence of Social Media on Consumption Patterns

Social media has fundamentally changed the way Generation Z makes consumption decisions. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube now serve not only as entertainment but also as a primary platform for developing product perceptions, preferences, and purchasing decisions. Generation Z uses social media not only to view product information but also to assess brand credibility through reviews, testimonials, and other user experiences (Bere et al., 2024). In this context, social media functions as both a marketing tool and a means of building consumer trust.

Bere et al. (2024) asserted that exposure to social media advertising has a direct influence on shaping young consumers' perceptions and preferences, especially when the messages are relevant to their personal values and lifestyles. Generation Z connects more with brands that display social values such as authenticity, diversity, and social responsibility. Advertisements that demonstrate concern for social issues, the environment, or public welfare tend to receive greater attention than those that simply promote products.

Furthermore, social media algorithms designed to tailor content to user preferences have increased brands' opportunities to reach targeted audiences. However, this also results in increased repeated exposure, which leads to unconscious consumption impulses. Bulu and Sofian (2024) added that the intensity of social media use is positively correlated with consumer behavior. The more frequently individuals are exposed to promotional content and influencer activity, the greater their tendency to make impulsive purchases. In other words, social media not only informs but also shapes emotional and instantaneous digital consumption habits.

Furthermore, social media has also created a new social phenomenon in the form of a trend-based consumption culture. Generation Z tends to imitate the consumption behavior of public figures they follow online. They feel part of the same community when purchasing or using viral products. This phenomenon is known as social proof, which is the tendency for individuals to imitate the consumption behavior of others perceived as having higher social status or influence (Zed et al., 2025). As a result, purchasing decisions are no longer based on need, but rather on the desire for social acceptance within the digital community.

In addition to being a marketing tool, social media also provides a space for consumers to share consumption experiences. Positive reviews from other users often strengthen purchase intentions, while negative experiences can quickly spread and damage a brand's reputation. Therefore, social media serves not only as a promotional channel but also as a reputational arena that is highly sensitive to public opinion. Generation Z, with their propensity for openness to information, is highly responsive to these dynamics.

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that social media acts as a complex consumption ecosystem, where marketing communications, social interactions, and digital identity formation are interconnected. Digital advertising on social media not only drives purchasing behavior but also influences how Generation Z perceives themselves within the broader social context. Therefore, digital marketing strategies must understand the psychological and social dynamics surrounding social media use to foster positive and sustained engagement.

Psychological and Emotional Factors in Purchasing Decision Making

Research by Putri and Sudaryanto (2022) shows that the allure of digital advertising plays a significant role in creating impulse purchases. Price discounts and engaging visual content in digital applications can trigger emotional impulses without rational consideration. In the context of Generation Z, psychological factors such as curiosity, the desire to follow trends, and emotional impulses generated by engaging content are key drivers in the purchasing decision-making process. These findings are supported by Fauziyah et al. (2024), who stated that Generation Z's shopping behavior is not solely driven by functional needs, but rather by the desire to gain emotional and social

experiences through digital interactions. This generation views shopping as a means of entertainment, self-expression, and social engagement. Online shopping on digital platforms provides a sense of instant gratification, which then encourages repeat consumer behavior.

Furthermore, Hasdiansa et al. (2023) highlighted that environmental awareness and social values are also beginning to influence the consumption patterns of the younger generation. Advertisements highlighting sustainable or eco-friendly brands have a positive impact on perceptions of Generation Z consumers because they are perceived as reflecting their values and social responsibility. This suggests that Generation Z's psychological dimensions are driven not only by personal pleasure but also by the search for meaning and social relevance in every purchasing decision.

Thus, psychological and emotional aspects are crucial in understanding how digital advertising influences Generation Z's consumption behavior. Marketers need to manage these emotional aspects ethically and with a focus on consumer well-being, rather than solely on commercial gain.

The Role of Influencers and Social Image in Consumption

Generation Z is more likely to trust recommendations from influencers than conventional advertising. Credibility built through emotional connections and an authentic communication style is a key factor in decision-making (Khairunnisa & Heriyadi, 2023). Influencers serve not only as product endorsers but also as opinion shapers and lifestyle advocates for their followers. Kurniawan and Ahmadi (2024) also found that social activity on digital media creates collective shopping habits, where purchasing decisions are often influenced by trends and social pressures within online communities.

This phenomenon demonstrates that digital advertising serves a dual function: in addition to promoting products, it also shapes Generation Z's social identity online. Products used or showcased on social media become status symbols and means of self-expression, replacing the role of traditional mass media in shaping lifestyles (Putri et al., 2025). The more frequently an influencer uses a particular product, the more likely their followers are to imitate that consumption behavior. This demonstrates that collaboration with influencers is highly effective in building brand image and expanding audience reach among young people.

Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategy and Economic Impact

A literature synthesis shows that digital advertising has a significant economic impact on Generation Z consumption patterns. Rafli and Uday (2024) found that digital campaigns with creative and interactive messaging strategies significantly improved consumer purchasing decisions. The use of technologies such as targeted advertising and data analytics enables companies to deliver more personalized messages tailored to user needs.

Saragih et al. (2025) confirmed that digital advertising positively influences consumer purchase intention and perception, especially when packaged with a strong visual communication approach. Brands that maintain consistent messaging and the quality of their digital content tend to earn greater trust and loyalty from young consumers. Furthermore, Susiati et al. (2024) asserted that economic digitalization has accelerated the shift in consumption behavior among college students, moving from traditional patterns to instant consumption based on e-commerce and social media.

Meanwhile, Utama et al. (2024) demonstrated that ease of transactions and the integration of e-commerce platforms with social media reinforce Generation Z's impulsive buying behavior. Platforms that combine entertainment and shopping functions create an instant, practical, and satisfying consumption experience. Similar findings were expressed by Zed et al. (2025) explained that social media is a dominant factor in shaping consumer behavior, as the constant appearance of promotional content creates a social proof effect, which is the tendency for individuals to imitate the consumption behavior of others in their environment.

Thus, it can be concluded that an effective digital marketing strategy not only increases sales figures but also shapes a new digital economic structure based on social interaction and user experience.

The literature analysis in this study is strengthened by explicitly comparing previous studies to highlight consistencies and contradictions in their findings. For example, some studies (Alhabsy et al., 2025; Amani, 2025) emphasize the importance of humor and authenticity in increasing Gen Z engagement, while other research (Ningsih et al., 2025; Zed et al., 2025) shows that high advertising exposure can sometimes lead to fatigue and reduce message effectiveness. These differences indicate that Gen Z's responses are not homogeneous and are influenced by platform context as well as the quality of content presentation.

Furthermore, methodological weaknesses were identified in several previous studies, such as limited sample sizes, the use of non-probabilistic sampling techniques, and a lack of longitudinal measurements. These critiques help clarify the argument that the impact of digital advertising on consumption behavior still requires a more integrative analytical approach.

Synthesis and Implications

The discussion in this study not only summarizes previous findings but also highlights several important contradictions in the literature. For example, the effectiveness of influencers remains debated: some studies suggest that micro-influencers are more trusted due to emotional closeness, while other research indicates that macro-influencers are still more effective because of their broader audience reach. Furthermore, conflicting results regarding whether entertainment content is more effective than educational content show that Gen Z's preferences are strongly influenced by trends, the dynamics of digital social interactions, and users' levels of advertising fatigue.

Literature limitations are also evident in the lack of studies that simultaneously integrate psychological, social, and economic aspects, which underscores the need for a multidimensional approach to better understand Gen Z's consumption behavior. This critical analysis reinforces the argument that digital consumption phenomena cannot be captured through a single perspective, but instead require a more holistic analytical framework.

Based on the overall study results, it can be concluded that digital advertising significantly influences Generation Z's consumption behavior across three main dimensions: psychological, social, and economic. Psychologically, visual and emotional appeal increases user engagement and encourages impulse purchases. Socially, the presence of influencers and digital communities strengthens the formation of consumer identities. Economically, easy access and fast transaction features create instant and sustainable consumption patterns.

Furthermore, this phenomenon also demands ethical responsibility from digital businesses to not only encourage consumption but also instill an awareness of financial literacy and sustainable consumption among young consumers. Companies need to design digital advertising strategies that are creative, transparent, and aligned with Generation Z's social values to build strong brand relationships and encourage responsible consumption behavior in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that digital advertising has a significant influence on Generation Z's consumption behavior, from psychological, social, and economic perspectives. Generation Z, having grown up in a digital environment, exhibits highly responsive consumption patterns to visual, interactive, and emotional content presented through various social media platforms. Digital advertising packaged with creative, authentic messages that align with their social values has proven more effective in shaping brand perceptions and driving purchase intention. Psychologically, visual appeal and emotional narratives in digital advertising can create impulse buying and increase user engagement with brands. Socially, the presence of influencers, digital trends, and a culture of social proof reinforce the formation of Generation Z's consumer identity, where consumption is no longer viewed solely as an economic activity but also as a means of self-expression and social image building. Economically, the ease of transactions, e-commerce integration, and instant shopping features on social media have accelerated the shift in consumption behavior toward fast, practical, and experience-based shopping patterns. Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of digital advertising strategies for Generation Z depends heavily on a company's ability to understand the characteristics of this generation namely, the desire for emotional experiences, social participation, and authentic messages. On the other hand, businesses need to pay attention to advertising ethics to avoid encouraging excessive consumer behavior and to play a role in building digital and financial literacy awareness among young consumers. A balanced approach between commercial interests and social responsibility will be key to building long-term relationships between brands and Generation Z in the digital age. Based on the literature synthesis, this study emphasizes that the success of digital advertising in influencing Gen Z's consumption heavily depends on visual appeal, message authenticity, and the integration of technology relevant to their digital identity. Accordingly, several practical recommendations can be made. For digital marketers, suggested strategies include using short content with emotional appeal, collaborating with credible influencers, and implementing interactive campaigns that involve user participation. For researchers, empirical studies with longitudinal designs are needed to observe changes in Gen Z's consumption behavior over time, as well as the development of conceptual models that assess the simultaneous relationships between psychological, social, and economic factors. For policymakers, it is important to promote ethical

digital advertising regulations, particularly concerning overexposure and the protection of young consumers. Strengthening digital and financial literacy among Gen Z is also a key recommendation to ensure healthy and sustainable consumption behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express his gratitude to the various parties who supported the preparation of this paper, entitled "The Impact of Digital Advertising on Generation Z Consumption Behavior." Special thanks are extended to his supervisor and colleagues who provided guidance, suggestions, and constructive feedback during the writing and refinement of this article. This research is a literature review based on an analysis of various scientific sources and previous research findings. Therefore, the author would also like to thank the researchers and academics whose works served as primary references in this research. Every result and finding in this paper is inseparable from the contributions of experts in the fields of digital marketing and consumer behavior. Finally, the author hopes that the results of this research can positively contribute to the development of literature and practice in the field of digital marketing, particularly in understanding the dynamics of Generation Z consumption behavior in the era of digital transformation. It is also hoped that this research can inspire future researchers to delve deeper into the phenomenon of digital advertising from the perspective of the younger generation.

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